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The Australian Defence Force

Broadened Concepts of Security Operations

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Conclusions

- The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is undergoing a transition from an armed force prepared purely for warfighting functions to a force capable of conducting a wide range of noncombatant functions.
- Australia's traditional security concepts emphasize national military power and a realist approach to international relations. This approach is being challenged by the Broadened Concepts of Security (BCOS).
- The ADF is increasingly involved in Broadened Concepts of Security Operations (BCOS OPS). These operations address BCOS problems and threats but generally do not involve combat.
- The use of the ADF in BCOS OPS is gradually gaining acceptance within the Australian Department of Defence [ADoD], and conventional armed conflict is seen by many commentators as less likely.
- The possible adoption of BCOS OPS as a role of the ADF may compete with the traditional war-fighting role and could result in fundamental force structure and resource changes.
- More Australian Government policy changes are possible, and increased participation in counter-drug operations has been foreshadowed. Changes are likely to be incremental and to encounter resistance.

Background

Australia is an island continent of roughly the same landmass as the continental United States. Following the declaration of the 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Australia is also responsible for a maritime area similar to its landmass. But Australia has a population of only 18 million people concentrated in coastal areas and particularly in the southeast. As a result of the disparity between its large size and small population, and its location far from its Western allies, Australia has historically

feared external threats to its national security. These fears have only been realized once: by Japanese attacks against northern Australia in 1942.

Australian policy responses to security threats have relied on participation in alliances. Prior to, and after its Federation in 1901, Australia provided forces to serve under British command. During and after World War II Australia gradually shifted its focus to interoperability with the U.S. military. Following World War II, Australian forces participated in several counter-insurgency campaigns in Southeast Asia including the Vietnam War. The policy of providing forces for these operations was known as *forward defence*. Australia has also been a contributor to multinational peacekeeping and collective security.

The last two decades have seen several developments in Australian defense policy. First, successive Australian governments defined the fundamental role of the ADF as the defense of Australia against armed attack rather than support for alliance operations overseas. This policy was referred to as *continental defence*. Second, Australia placed great emphasis on its alliance with the United States and became increasingly reliant on U.S. defense technology and intelligence. Third, Australia developed a layered defense strategy to exploit its isolated location. Fourth, successive governments agreed that Australia was unlikely to face a direct threat of military attack for at least 10 years and that the origin of that threat *could not be foreseen*.

The ADF and Australian Defense Policy

The ADF is a volunteer force of 57,028 permanent and 26,362 reserve personnel. It is made up of the Royal Australian Navy (155 ships, including submarines and auxiliaries), the Australian Army (nine brigades/task forces), and the Royal Australian Air Force (192 aircraft). The ADOD has an annual budget of 10.5 billion Australian dollars. The ADF is downsizing toward only 50,000 full-time personnel by the year 2000. This will represent a 30 percent decrease of full-time personnel since 1985. The ADF is under pressure to carry out its mission with declining resources, due to fiscal restraint and the lack of a direct military threat.

The current government, a coalition of the Liberal and National Parties of the center right, has expanded the declared role of the ADF from "continental defence" to operations further afield in the region. The government has stated that "Australia's security interests go well beyond the physical protection of Australian territory" and Australia's security interests are "inextricably linked to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region." Australia has also officially recognized the existence of the broadened range of threats to security.

Current Australian defense policy has four force structure development priorities: maintaining the "knowledge edge" (over Australia's regional neighbors) using intelligence and technology; defeating threats in Australia's maritime approaches using air and naval forces; strike (against potential aggressors using F-111 bombers, submarines and special forces); and land force capabilities.

These priorities continue to emphasize the defense of Australia in preference to other types of operational planning scenarios. Australian defense thinking is steeped in the realist philosophy, and the public position of the Australian defense bureaucracy is that they have neither the charter nor the resources to plan for missions not directly associated with the defense of Australia against military attack. But interestingly the Defence mission is currently stated as:

To promote the security of Australia, *and to protect its people and interests*. [author's italics]

This mission contains a hint of the broadening role of the ADF which is likely to liberate it from concentrating on the defense of Australia and eventually realizing its full potential in new types of operations.

The Australian Government has traditionally operated using security concepts that emphasize national military power, but this traditional approach is being influenced by the increasing importance of Broadened Concepts of Security (BCOS), in which security operates at the individual, national, regional, and international levels. BCOS involve challenges such as economic dysfunction, environmental problems, epidemics, famines, ethnic conflict, religious conflict, sub-state nationalist conflict, terrorism, and crime.

The ADF is increasingly being used in BCOS OPS. These are operations that are intended to address BCOS problems and threats. They may involve the use of force, but generally do not involve combat. The types of operations are not necessarily new, but their increased acceptance and frequency are best understood within a BCOS framework of analysis.

The ADF and BCOS OPS

The government recognizes the ADF as a resource with capabilities that are useful in the context of the broadened security paradigm and which are often unavailable from other agencies. The ADF can often provide capabilities more quickly, in remote areas, in hostile environmental areas, over longer periods, more cheaply, in greater numbers, or with less complaint. The range and frequency of BCOS OPS will likely increase. Experience indicates that BCOS OPS are likely to fall into nine categories. A brief survey of these categories, and their implications, follows.

1. Support to the Civil Community. Many capabilities that were purchased for combat purposes have proven highly useful in more mundane tasks. The ADF routinely assists the civil community by loaning equipment, expertise and manpower. The ADF has recently provided housing and improved water supplies for Aboriginal communities in remote areas of the Northern Territory. The Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 will also require substantial civil operations assistance from the ADF. Although concerns have been raised that the ADF is being used as a cost-free resource for a wide range of tasks for which it is neither trained or resourced, this phenomenon is likely to increase.

2. Environmental Support. Environmental problems pose threats to harmonious relationships between states and, sometimes, to the survival of people who are affected. In Australia's region, these problems currently include the forest fires in Indonesia which cause serious haze problems throughout Southeast Asia, and the drought in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The ADF is increasingly involved in the Australian response to environmental problems through food distribution to the highlands of Papua New Guinea and Indonesian West Irian.

3. Search and Rescue. Australia is responsible for the coordination of search and rescue (SAR) operations in the Australian Maritime SAR Region. This region stretches from the middle of the Indian Ocean in the west, to the Indonesian Archipelago in the north, to New Caledonia and New Zealand in the east, and Antarctica in the south. As a result, the Navy and Air Force have performed several long-range SAR operations into the southern Indian Ocean to rescue boaters in dire distress. Rescues have been made by warships up to 2,400 kilometers southwest of Perth under such severe conditions as four-meter [13-foot] swells, cold weather, and 40 knot winds. This BCOS OPS category will not decrease in importance.

4. Disaster Relief. The ADF is frequently called upon to support state and territory emergency services during floods and forest fires. The ADF is able to provide large numbers of disciplined personnel to assist state and territory governments at short notice and maintain them in arduous conditions. The Army has also been called on to provide mass inoculations against deadly infectious diseases because of its ability to react more quickly than civilian medical agencies. This BCOS OPS category also will not diminish.

5. Law Enforcement. Australia has no coast guard and maritime barrier control and constabulary operations are supported by the ADF. Australia's 1.63 billion Australian dollar fishing industry is being threatened by up to 1,000 illegal fishing vessels each year and Indonesian fishing vessels are routinely apprehended by ADF patrol boats. Several flag of convenience fishing vessels have been apprehended by ADF warships near Australia's McDonald and Heard Islands, located 4,100 kilometers from the mainland. The Government has also recently announced that unlicensed Japanese tuna fishing boats will be seized if they operate in the EEZ. ADF support to barrier control contributes to the prevention of illegal immigration and the Minister for Defence has foreshadowed the increased use of the ADF against the supply of illicit drugs. Air Force and naval maritime patrols are conducted throughout the Indian Ocean and Southwest Pacific and these contribute to the protection of the natural resources of regional nations. The growing problem of piracy in Southeast Asian waters is another field of potential ADF operations. The ADF is also capable of conducting limited law enforcement support operations in support of the governments of regional nations. This BCOS OPS category is likely to increase in importance.

6. Counterterrorism. The ADF provides specialist bomb disposal capability and since 1981 has also provided the last resort close quarter battle capability to resolve siege-hostage situations. The use of the ADF in counterterrorist operations requires the authority of a "call-out" from the Governor General. The ADF can also perform counterterrorism operations outside of Australia. Such operations may be required to support another nation's efforts to resolve a terrorist situation or as part of an ADF peace operation or evacuation operation. This BCOS OPS role is likely to increase as part of ADF planning for overseas operations.

7. International Engagement. An important element of Australia's efforts to engage with its region is provided by the ADF. Examples of this work are military diplomacy and reciprocal visits; defense cooperation and training; and international exercises and security conferences. This role is not new but it is increasingly important because Australia is seeking to improve its political, economic and cultural linkages to Asia and the Pacific. The governmental elite of many regional nations include military personnel and the ADF provides unique linkages between Australia and these elite. ADF training may also improve respect for human rights among some regional armed forces.

8. Peace Operations. The ADF is experienced in peace operations. The period since the end of the Cold War has seen an increase in this form of operation and the increasing incidences of failed states and interventionism indicate that this is likely to continue. Recent ADF peace operations have occurred in the Middle East, Western Sahara, Cambodia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Bosnia and Papua New Guinea.

These operations have generally been oriented toward improving social conditions and alleviating suffering, and are often performed by unarmed ADF personnel. This provides an insight into the changing nature of the ADF participation in peace operations. The ADF is performing the missions less because it is capable of wielding deadly force than because it is equipped with disciplined personnel, who can act as observers or provide humanitarian capabilities in harsh environments. These BCOS OPS

will continue to be required and may gain recognition as an ADF mission in the force structure development process.

9. Evacuation Operations. Many countries in the region are threatened by internal breakdowns in law and order and the possibility of *coup d'etat*. Australia's reaction to these situations has consisted of efforts to mediate between factions and stabilize the situation, while preparing to evacuate Australians and other approved nationals from the country to a safe location. ADF planning includes provision for Services Assisted Evacuations (SAE) from benign environments and Services Protected Evacuations (SPE) from higher-threat environments. An SAE was conducted from Cambodia in July 1997 and the deteriorating law and order situation in Indonesia in early 1998 led to the pre-deployment of ADF aircraft to facilitate a possible similar operation. Scenarios for future evacuation operations within the region are apparent.

Combatant Operations

With the exception of limited participation in the 1991 Gulf War, the ADF has not performed a combatant operation with the aim of destroying an enemy force for over 27 years. During that period the ADF has been a successful deterrent of possible military attacks against Australia although there were no known likely threats.

The increasing importance of BCOS OPS does not mean that traditional combatant operations are obsolete. The ADF must remain capable of compelling other nations to conform with Australian policy or international collective security policy. To this end, ADF units were deployed to the Gulf in early 1998 as part of preparations for UN enforcement operations.

For and Against Broadened Operations

The likelihood of interstate conflict is declining although the 1991 Gulf War shows that it is still possible. At the same time the incidence of intrastate conflict is rising and this trend is significant for the planning of the future force structure of the ADF. The ADF is less likely to be employed in the defense of Australia against military threats than in the defense of Australia's interests against a range of military and nonmilitary threats.

Several factors indicate that the ADF will increasingly prepare for and conduct BCOS OPS. They include: the positive effects on ADF morale that are derived from performing missions that have a demonstrable benefit rather than more esoteric missions such as deterring aggression; the positive effect on public relations as the ADF works more closely with the general community; the useful training that is required to prepare for BCOS OPS, and the valuable experience which accrues from them; and the examples and experience of other Western nations that use their military forces in law enforcement tasks. Other factors include: pressure from the Australian public for the ADF to demonstrate its relevance, and from law enforcement agencies seeking more access to sophisticated ADF capabilities; and, international and domestic pressure on the Australian Government to contribute to collective security responses to regional crises.

However, arguments against the increasing adoption of BCOS OPS have been raised within the policy, academic, military, social and legal spheres. Policy practitioners are unwilling to dilute the meaning of security from the realist understanding. The ADOD and the small but influential defense industry benefit from the perception that Australia faces military threats as they reinforce the need for the maintenance of the defense budget and the purchase of expensive warfighting equipment. The Australian academic

community has served to reinforce the realist model with little dissent on government policy. The leadership of the ADF is wary of any expansion in its roles because they are concerned that expansion could leave the ADF unprepared for the mission of defending Australia against attack. The ADF leadership may also be reluctant to become further involved in the sphere of criminality and law enforcement because of the likelihood of corruption infiltrating the defense force as it has the police forces.

Other arguments against BCOS OPS relate to the unique nature of military service. Some believe that an organization which exists "to kill people and break things" is unsuitable for participation in normal society. Others believe that the ADF is not specifically trained for many types of BCOS OPS and the time spent on such training would reduce time spent on training for warfighting and thus could erode the "warrior ethos." They contend the ADF is not equipped for many BCOS OPS roles and spending on this equipment could reduce available funds for warfighting equipment. Finally, legal issues within the Australian Federal judicial system make it problematic for the ADF to assume greater constabulary roles without legislative amendments.

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